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SUBJECT: NATO/GEORGIA: NATO SECRETARY-GENERAL'S MEETING
WITH GEORGIAN PRESIDENT SAAKASHVILI

REF: JONES-RPM E-MAIL 02/28/07

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Richard G. Olson for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

¶1. (U) Below is the text of a report distributed to NATO Allies by the NATO Secretary-General on his February 27 meeting with Georgian President Saakashvili at NATO Headquarters.

¶2. (C) Begin Text: President Saakashvili visited Brussels from 26-27 February 2007 for meetings with NATO and the EU. This was President Saakashvili's second visit to NATO Headquarters, the previous visit coming in Spring 2004, when he delivered Georgia's Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) Presentation Document to the Council.

During our meeting, I noted that the Intensified Dialogue (ID) process was off to a good start, and that it was important for Georgia to use IPAP and ID to the fullest extent possible. I briefed President Saakashvili on the main findings of the IPAP assessment team visit from 19-22 February. I noted that the assessment team saw good progress in many areas, but at the same time several shortcomings were identified that would need to be addressed as a matter of priority. I noted, as I have in the past, that further steps in the NATO-Georgia relationship will be based on Georgia's performance in meeting reform goals, in particular those laid out in the IPAP.

I also informed President Saakashvili on the main outcomes of the Riga Summit, in particular highlighting the strong support for Georgia's territorial integrity, while at the same time urging continued commitment to peaceful conflict resolution. I noted that Allies appreciate Georgia's contributions to international peacekeeping and peace support operations, which show that Georgia is aiming to be a net contributor to regional and international security. In particular, I welcomed Georgia's willingness to make a contribution to NATO's mission in Afghanistan, and expressed my hope that arrangements regarding this contribution could be finalized shortly.

President Saakashvili provided me with an overview of regional dynamics in the South Caucasus and Central Asia. He said that Georgia was trying to be a regional leader, showing through example that reforms work. He expressed his view that other regional countries like Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan were becoming more confident, and were beginning to pursue their own foreign policies independent of Moscow.

The President expressed his strong belief that Russian sanctions against Georgia were actually helping the Georgian economy in the long run, as Georgian producers were diversifying their markets and improving product quality. He said that he expected Georgian-Russian relations to stabilize following the tensions last fall, and expressed his hope that

Georgia and Russia could build a relationship based on pragmatism and respect for sovereignty. The President said that Georgia had seen real benefits from the policy of "laying low" the past few months and not overreacting to Russian provocations, and that this policy would continue. He did express some concern, however, that relations with Georgia (including on South Ossetia and Abkhazia) might become an issue in the 2008 presidential elections, which could harm bilateral relations once again.

President Saakashvili reiterated Georgia's full commitment to pursue peaceful conflict resolution with regard to South Ossetia and Abkhazia. He said that Georgia would continue to make concrete proposals aimed at resolution of the conflicts, and was already engaged in infrastructure rehabilitation activities in both regions. He said that Georgia appreciated the Alliance's "principled" stand on the territorial integrity of Georgia, and expressed his hope that the EU would become more engaged on helping to resolve the conflicts, both through facilitating confidence-building projects but also through pushing for a change to the negotiating formats.

President Saakashvili expressed his country's continued commitment to join the Alliance as soon as possible, and said that Georgia would take whatever technical steps were necessary to improve IPAP performance. He reiterated the Georgian Foreign Minister's invitation for the NAC to visit Georgia in the fall of 2007, and expressed his belief that this would make a substantial contribution to the Intensified Dialogue process.

President Saakashvili also highlighted Georgia's continued commitment to international peacekeeping and peace support

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operations, and said that Georgia's commitment to KFOR would continue. He said discussions were ongoing with several Allies regarding a Georgian commitment to ISAF, and said that he hopes to finalize these discussions and to enable a deployment in the next few months. In particular, he noted that the Georgian MOD is developing a mountain warfare training center, and that this might be a good venue for training specialists of the Afghan National Army.

Finally, regarding Ukraine, President Saakashvili expressed optimism about the long-term direction of the country. He said that Ukraine is currently like a boat without a rudder. It does not have firm direction, but it is nonetheless drifting slowly towards the West. He said that while the "go slow" policy of Prime Minister Yanukovich was unlikely to change anytime soon, Yanukovich had shown increasing pragmatism over the past few months. End Text.

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